



Interview with Bodhi, the tabla player.

The Shadow of the Whip.
Darshan Diary.
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The music group was at Darshan tonight. Bhodi, the tabla player, shares his experience..

My eyes are closed. My fingers rest on the skins of the tablas, feeling their grain. I've hammered their pegs and rims with the little silver hammer until their tone matches the tambour's dark drone which is silent now as we sit in a circle, waiting for the music to happen. I open my eyes for a moment and see the dancers standing around us, eyes closed, swaying in anticipation. The Master sits in his armchair, legs casually crossed, watching. His eyes graze mine and my lids squeeze shut, I can't stand to look in his eyes for very long lately.

The tamboura starts to hum and finds a sympathetic vibration in my lower belly. A familiar tingle spreads over my body and a tasteless taste creeps into my mouth: the tingle, the taste of meditation. Meditation is still a tender bud in me, and my mind scoffs at it. But as my fingers start to slide and tap on the drumhead, the mind slows down a little and a sort of thin transparent veil slides down in front of its restless verbalisations. I feel my centre shift from the mind to another part of myself: a silent, alert part that only watches and listens, a part bigger than the rest of me.

Voices join the tamboura and I begin to hum in tune inside my

skull. Behind the ears, obscure passages pop open and the humming fills my head like wind through a hollow bamboo. Then there is this the silver penetration of the electric guitar. Tambourine. Temple bells. Soprano saxophone. Flutes, wooden and silver. Music washes through us and I can feel the dancing bodies moving around counter clockwise, as per the master's instructions. I don't know what this motion does for us but I can feel it raising the energy of the music. We play on a simple chord, allowing silences to come and go

"You are no longer there, you are lost," Osho said of the music meditation." You are joined by a telepathic cord which surrounds you like a climate, touches you all, plays on your hearts together; that climate takes over, and you are possessed."

Osho instituted the "Nadam" (soundless sound) music meditation over a year ago, as a way into spontaneity and letting go while still being in harmony with others. Some of us have been professional musicians, others have never played or sang with a group before "Nadam". We play every night: ninety minutes or more of spontaneous improvisation for about twenty players, allowing existence to play upon us as a collective instrument, allowing the unknown to happen. Once a month we play before Osho, and his presence always brings a touch of the beyond. I always have the feeling, when we play before him, that he's doing something to us as a group, changing us, welding us together.

Some weeks ago Osho told me that playing the tabla is my meditation. I used to think that meditation meant sitting perfectly still, shutting out "distractions" and concentrating on mandalas and mantras, not scratching when I itched and thinking about what it would be like to stop thinking. Instead, I'm swaying with the music, fingers and wrists flapping at the drums, listening alert to each slight facet of sound, not concentrating, not excluding anything, but drinking it all in, getting drunk on music.

And while I play, the mind is still with me, droning on, trying to take me away from the musical here and now. Often it enthrones itself is the Great Meditator, judging and criticising, demanding progress reports and proofs of results. But the mind

gradually recedes behind a pane of glass that gets thicker as the music deepens, and there is no way to answer its questions except by playing the tabla and laughing.

Occasionally the mind tries to involve itself directly in the music as it did in West, where improvised music often consisted of a collection of clever musical egos trying to one up each other and impress the audience. Here, whenever the mind gets me to play something flashy or clever, every time, unerringly the effort punctuates the harmony, and I find myself out of step. And here, the audience is Osho. How do you make an impression on an emptiness?

Sudha sits across the circle from me with her head thrown back, mouth open in an enormous singing smile. Yesterday she described the ashram as a place where, "The ego is gently, almost musically, starved to death."

We've been playing thirty minutes or seconds or years. I open my eyes to see Osho gesturing with upturned palm, to bring the music to a peak. With hands slapping drums and breath pumping flutes, and shouts and claps, we make sweet thunder.

And suddenly it's over, and he beckons us to come closer. I make my way to a spot near his chair and lie face down, exhausted. The body is tingling all over from the currants that have passed through it. "Good", I hear his voice softly saying, "Very good." I look up and see silent bodies prone on the cool marble floor, forming an orange half Mandela before his empty chair.

I stand up and go to gather my tablas, and find I'm not really exhausted—on the contrary, energised—yet stunned and silent. Everybody's getting up now, and no one speaks. Everyone seems bright eyed and blown away as if we've all just survived some sort of delicious earthquake together. We laugh and weep and hold each other, and make our way out into the night..